DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 158 919 RC 010 669

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TITLE Teacher Education and Community Development Project Organised by the Teachers' College - Hingurakgoda, Sri Lanka.
INSTITUTION United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Bangkok (Thailand). Regional Office for Education in Asia.
PUB DATE 8 Apr 78
NOTE 20p.; Not available in hard copy due to poor print quality of original; Paper presented at the UNESCO National Seminar in Education for Rural Development (Sri Lanka, April 8-13, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Change Agents; *College Curriculum; *Community Development; Community Education; Elementary School Curriculum; Higher Education; Leadership Responsibility; Rural Development; *Rural Schools; Rural Urban Differences; *School Community Relationship; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

An innovative project in training teachers for community development was begun in three remote villages in Sri Lanka in 1975 by one of the country's 28 teacher colleges. Under supervision by a resident Teacher Educator, teacher trainees were placed in villages for two weeks per term not only to teach the two courses per day required by all of the teacher colleges but to participate in village life, complete socioeconomic surveys of the villages, and, in consultation with village leadership, draw up development schemes. The project stressed the role of the teacher as an agent of change, an attitude developer, creative thinker, community leader. Besides introducing leadership skills to the trainee and opening his eyes to development problems faced by the rural poor, the project made the school the operational center for socioeconomic and cultural progress in the community and helped bridge the gap between a teacher college curriculum geared toward urban and suburban schools and rural realities. Trainee activities ranged from introducing mobile dispensaries and expanding economic opportunities to drawing up a curriculum more relevant to rural people and initiating adult education. Despite problems, the project gained villagers' enthusiasm, increased enrollments, involved more parents with school, and brought requests for similar programs from adjoining schools. (RS)

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TEACHER EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Organised by the Teachers' College
Hingurakgoda
Sri Lanka

By

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UNESCO NATIONAL SEMINAR
IN
EDUCATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT
SRI LANKA

9th-13th April 1978

EC-010669

CONTENTS

		Page
1.00	Scope of the Project	1
2.00	Socio Economic set up of the village in Sri Lanka	1
3.00	The New Educational Reforms	2
3.10	Reforms	2
3.20	Reforms & Socio Economic needs	2
4.00	Present Teacher Education system in Sri Lanka	3
4.10	Teachers' College courses	3
4.20	Teaching practice - Its methods, Scope and Limitations	4
5.00	Philosophy of the Project	5
5.10	Teacher and the Community	5
5.20	Role of the teacher as an Agent of Change	6
5.21	Attitude Developer	6
5.22	Creative Thinker	7
5.23	Community Leader	7
6.00	Aims, Objectives and Activities	7
6.10	Specific Aims & Objectives of the Innovation.	7
6.20	Activities	8
7.00	Management Process	8
7.10	Selection of Village	8
7.20	Planning	9
7.30	Organisation	12
7.40	Direction	13
7.50	Control on the basis of Communication and Feedback	15
7.60	Evaluation	15
8.00	Collaboration with other Departments and Ministries	17
9.00	Present Development	17

TEACHER EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A Project Organised By
THE TEACHERS' COLLEGE - HINGURAKGODA
SRI LANKA

1.00 Scope of the Project

Introduced for the first time in Sri Lanka, this was an innovative project in Teacher Training for Community Development. The project commenced in June 1975. The project which was based on three selected villages of the Polonnaruwa District, required the Teacher Trainees (TT) under the supervision of a Teacher Educator(TE), to live in these remote villages during a stipulated time. In addition to the normal teaching programme in the school, organising and participating in activities involving the community such as development projects based on the local resources, were an integral part of the programme. Meeting the villagers, discussing their problems and needs, drawing up of projects, helping them in their day to day work, attending their social functions, helping them to bring these matters to the notice of the respective government officials were some aspects of this training programme. Week-ends and afternoons were made use of for these activities in the village.

2.00 Socio Economic set up of the village in Sri Lanka

"The village in Sri Lanka is a very unpretentious institution. It is a social unit interlinked by economic and kindered ties, keeping unbroken relations with other villages, for martial, economic and other social requirements." * The population in the village is not very high. Agriculture is the main occupation. Often people of the same caste inhabit a village. The village is not an economically self sufficient unit. The resources and the kindness of the villager are invariably exploited by this unscruplous and sophisticated urban brother .
There is generally a great respect for and undue fear of the government servant and what he says is taken as gospel truth and government policy. Various crafts are practised in villages and these are mainly related and subordinated to the economic and social needs of the village and the

* Dr. N.D. Wijesekara 'The People of Ceylon pg. 69.

adjoining villages. However, today most of them are disappearing. The most common government institution in a village is the school and of the government employees the teacher is resident in the village and enjoys the respect of the villager. As a result of the modernisation process there is a general trend of rural population migrating to urban areas causing two problems -

1. Aggravating the unemployment and housing problem in the urban sector.
2. Leaving the rural areas to be exploited and unattended to, due to the lack of skills on the part of the remaining population.

This dichotomy has to be rectified if an overall development process is to succeed in Sri Lanka. The New Educational Reforms introduced in 1972 has emphasised this aspect by recreating a desire and an attitudinal change to serve rural areas.

3.00 The New Educational Reforms

3.10 The New Educational Reforms, introduced in 1972, hope to develop the child into a resourceful citizen- a citizen mindful of the problems, resources and priorities of the country and thus introduce the child at early age, into a world of work and instill the correct attitudes towards life and society.

3.20 These reforms were geared to meet the socio economic needs of the country. In this, every citizen bears a responsibility to assist in the task of developing the nation. Since the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for nation building has to be generated at school level, it is important that the teacher be oriented to this philosophy during the pre-service training itself. Only then will the teacher respond positively to the needs of the community. Hence the importance of a radical change in the Teacher Education programme.

4.00 Present Teacher Education System in Sri Lanka

4.10 (i) In Sri Lanka there are 28 Teachers' Colleges. The duration of all courses is two years. Each Teachers' College has a Special Course and ~~General~~ Primary Education is the most common of these. Some of the other special courses are English, Mathematics, Science, Agriculture, ~~etc. Specialises in a particular course of studies and of these the "General Course" is the commonest.~~ Except for the subject speciality, the curriculum and the approach are the same in all Teachers' Colleges. Pre-vocational subjects, which form an important aspect of the New Educational Reforms, are also introduced to all Teachers' Colleges from this year as a part of the course work. The medium of instruction for all courses is the mother tongue. A large percentage of teachers in Sri Lanka are trained in ~~General~~ Primary Education. All courses are examination oriented and follow the same pattern of training.

(ii) The training they receive is geared exclusively for the urban and suburban schools where facilities are available. The techniques and attitudes the trainee learns and gathers are unsuitable to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the remote, rural and deprived school in Sri Lanka. Even in the urban areas there are a large number of schools which suffer from deprivation of basic needs. The instructional techniques imparted at the TC and the learning process of the rural and the deprived child run at a tangent. The teaching techniques are sophisticated. The rural child learns in a more practical way- climbing a tree chasing a cow, creeping through the jungle, helping the parents are some of the ways they learn. Hence not only the instructional techniques but also the content of teacher training, needs a radical change. The fact that all teachers today do not earn the same respect in the rural areas as in other times suggests that the traditional role of the teacher has outlived its purpose. The role thus requires a radical change, to suit the present day needs.

4.20 Teaching Practice-Its Methods, Scope and Limitations.

(i) In the present Teacher Training Programme, where didactic aspect preceeds practical training, Teaching Practice period is the only occasion the trainee gets to go out into the community as part of the course work. We made use of this time for our project.

(ii) Teaching Practice refers to the period of time, the trainee is attached to a neighbouring school and undergoes a practical training in pedagogy under the guidance of a TE. This period lasts for two weeks a term i.e. four months, commencing from the second term of the TT's first year. In all there are four such periods for the course. The last term is devoid of any extra work to allow the trainee to study for the final examination. The performance in teaching practice is important for a pass at the final examination.

(iii) The teachers are expected to teach for about two periods a day, in any grade in the 1-9 area. This compels the teacher to stay in the school for only about two hours a day. These two periods of work comply to the normal school work in the time table. In all, the TT cover up two weeks of work in any subject area. During this period the TT also observes the lessons of their colleagues.

(iv) This training does not involve them in any way in the extra curricular work of the school. It's not obligatory either to attend staff meetings, morning assemblies or parent teacher associations meetings. The period of time is too short for the teacher even to know the background of the children in the class. He is a visitor who has come to the school for a specific job i.e. to learn the traditional art of teaching,

for this is the most he could accomplish during this funnel approach to the school That the school has a binding attachment to the community it serves is not a concept for the TT to know and understand during this period. Neither does the teacher get an opportunity to grasp the problems encountered in these schools. The perspective of looking at education from the point of view of the community never enters the frame of mind of the TT. Thus understanding of the child, the environment of the school and the community are equally important components of the teacher to make an effective impact on the change of behaviour of the child. Since we did not plan a course of action that would have raised protests from teacher trade unions for taking time off the normal examination structured course, we conveniently made use of this period for our work, for it did not matter where teaching practice was conducted.

5.00 Philosophy of the Project

5.10 (i) Education of the teacher to understand the realities of the community, not in isolation but in participation.

Teacher Training programme should help not to turn out mere academics rich in knowledge and poor in skilled action. The TT programme should have a bearing on the socio economic problems of our country. The training should elicit the initiativity and the creativity of the TT. The teacher moulded in this pattern would come into grips with the reality and be a resourceful person outside the precincts of the school.

(ii) The introduction of the concept of developmental education and self reliance as a part of the Teacher Education Programme.

In the context of our country the progress of the village is basic to any developmental planning. The village constitutes the core of the country and the smallest unit of organisation. Like in most developing countries, in Sri Lanka too, there is a trend towards the mobilisation of traditional strategies at village level, while adopting new techniques. Its here that the teacher comes into importance. A teacher trained in community development work and village leadership could guide the villager by identifying resources, finding problems and priorities and guiding them in organisational matters. These programmes could be related to economic, social and cultural fields. For the teacher, this is a new venture and an additional role. The school could be the centre of activity and the teacher the change agent.

5.20 Role of the teacher as an Agent of Change

Under this new scheme there is no 'funnel approach' to the village school and they function not as visitors but as Agents of Change. Its just not learn to teach alone but to learn how to serve in different capacities. In the village the TT are to be the operational resource i.e. the body that will activate and generate the human and natural resources in the village for the common good of the community.

5.21 Attitude Developer

The teacher's role is important as all changes operate through him, in the classroom. The ability to invent, to treat knowledge imaginatively and to enlist pupils help to explore ideas are important functions of the teacher. Above all he should be able to know, feel, understand and appreciate the society he lives in. His attitudes should be oriented to meet the above tasks. If the schools are therefore, to foster new ideals, aspirations and serve as perennial agents of development of the nation, the teacher should be ~~able to know~~ competent in the desired field. The success in translating the objectives and aspirations of the nation will depend, largely, on the nature and quality of teacher training.

5.22 Creative Thinker

Education, by and large, improves the quality of thinking of both the child and the teacher. Such and an education will enable to develop the right form of thinking necessary for nation building. Therefore, it is one of the greatest responsibilities of the teacher to make the young mind fertile enough to cultivate a proper form of thinking. This would be possible not only by training the teacher to teach the child 'how to learn' but also training the teacher himself to sharpen the creative and critical thinking of the child.

5.23 Community Leader

Another vital aspect that needs attention in the teacher training programme is the role of the Teachers' Colleges in relation to its neighbourhood. The new education scheme in Sri Lanka directed towards nation building, brings a significant rapport between the school and the society. This objective is yet to be perfected in Teachers' Colleges. There are enough areas of local development which the TT could profitably be associated with. The teacher training curriculum should be channelled in such a way that the TT work intensively and in a wide variety of activities with the community. In addition to his primary role as a teacher the personality of the teacher should be moulded in such a way that he could comfortably assume the role fitting a community leader. The needs of a villager are diverse today and the teacher has to recognise this diversity if he is to be more profitable to the community. Thus the role of the teacher should be expanded and widened to meet the current demands of the community. For this the teacher needs a practical training.

6.00 Aims, Objectives and Activities.

6.10 Specific Aims and Objectives of the Innovation

1) To deepen the Teacher Trainees' understanding of the following:

   (a) the development problems faced by the rural people.

   (b) relevance of one's education to rural development.

   (c) Interdisciplinary thinking and cross sectional approach to problems.

2) To develop certain ~~certain~~ skills of the teachers, enabling them to design and participate in village development programmes in a practical way.

3) To provide opportunities for the Teacher Trainees to establish a better relationship with government officials, which in turn enables them to have a better perception of rural development problems.

4) To enable the teacher to be more useful to the community in which he lives and serves.

5) To make the school the operational centre for socio-economic and cultural progress of the community.

6) To enable the teacher to get a deeper understanding of the child.

7) To make the villagers aware of the natural resources in the area so that they can make use of them in developing the villages.

8) To develop the concept of the self reliance amongst the rural population.

6.20 Activities

In each village a convenient group of about six TT with a TE lived throughout the entire period of two weeks. This replaced the earlier superficial teaching practice system by a more meaningful and rewarding method. The Trainees by living in the village became a part of the community. During the entire period the group looked after themselves without taxing the villager. During the school hours they did their teaching practice and in the evenings and during week-ends they involved themselves in survey activities of the village. This helped them to understand the crux of the problem of the village. In further consultation with the village leadership, the teachers drew up schemes of development of the village. These plans invariably involve other government departments. The entire project was carried out by the TT in consultation with the TE.

7.00 Management Process

7.10 Selection of Villages

The villages selected for the project were all from the Polonnaruwa District, where the TC is situated. It is a socially and economically deprived area in Sri Lanka

It is mainly an agricultural region. The majority of the people here are new settlers. Social amenties and transport facilities are comparitively poor. In the selection of the village, difficulties and remoteness of the village school were taken into consideration. This was to give more experience for the TT.

(i) Illukwewa - A'purana' (old) village, situated about 25 miles from the TC. Population 200

(ii) Attaragallewa - a new settlement in a gemming region. 30 miles from the TC. Population 350.

(iii) Rotawewa - a'purana' village (old village) with a new settlement. 10 miles from the TC. Population 290.

7.20 Planning

Before setting on the Project an orientation programme on methodology and sociology was conducted for the TT at the TC. In addition the District Medical Officer briefed the trainees on the health problems of the District. Identification of diseases, preventive measures and nutrition were some of the topics that were discussed at this session.

(i) Socio Economic Survey of the Village

This was the first activity of the TT, after the visit to the village. This was carried out over the evenings and week ends. The following techniques were adopted (a) A guided Questionaire (b) Discussions (c) Interview (d) Observation. Based on these findings reports were submitted by the TT. These indicated the resources available, demographic characteristics and the pressing needs. Based on these and further discussions with the villagers plans were formulated and presented to the relevant authorities for action. In drawing up of projects the following procedure was adopted.

(a) Location of resources-natural, human, and operational quantity/quality/type/economy.

(b) Inputs and expenditure.

(c) Opportunities for employment, including self employment.

(d) Priority needs.

(e) External influences.

(f) Marketing facilities.

This programme was to be worked out in stages.

(ii) Proposed Examples of such Activities

(a) Steps were taken to keep the out of school children and villagers occupied by providing facilities for bee keeping and cloth weaving by the supply of bee boxes and weaving machines.

(b) Providing a bus service.

(c) Introducing mobile dispensaries.

(d) Starting poultry keeping, brick making, lime making and handicraft projects.

(e) Preparation of medicinal oils from seeds.

(f) Collection of medicinal herbs on a commercial basis.

(g) Provision of a water service.

(iii) Survey on the Educational Scene of the Village

The techniques were the same as above. The following problems were studied. Drop out rate, non school going population, teacher attendance, the teachers relations with the school, physical set up of the school and facilities available, aspirations of the villagers, relevance of the curriculum to the socio economic needs of the village, achievements of the children and health problems of the village.

(a) Since it was found that certain sections of the general curriculum, meant for all schools in Sri Lanka, had little relevance to these schools, Steps were taken to draw up suitable curricula taking into consideration the resources and the aspirations of the people.

(b) Initiating educational programmes for adults.

(c) Getting aid in the form of stationary, text books and clothing from well to do schools in other parts of Sri Lanka.

(d) Adopting new teaching techniques by taking children into the village i.e. the well, tank, worksite, where teaching was related to daily life.

(e) Organising cultural activities in the evenings.

(f) Organising exhibitions of work of the school and inviting parents for the occassion.

(iv) Other Aspects of the Innovation which were Accidential Off shoots of Planning

(a) Taking part in social occassions in the village as in funerals and weddings.

(b) Participating in Shramadana work(voluntary) e.g. working in paddy fields, repairing a temple, offering alms to the priest of the temple, preparing a playground.

(c) Getting the assistance of the neighbouring villages to assist one of the villages.

(d) Changing the superstitious beliefs, e.g. after a death in the village the children do not attend the school for three days through fear. Even adults do not walk alone during this period. This situation was observed at the Illukwewa village.

(v) Problems/Constraints

(a) The time was not enough to go deep into certain problems in certain villages. This was due to the short duration of the programme. Since it was not a part of the main course, there was no possibility of devoting more time. Hence the delay in attending to the overall work of the progress of the project.

(b) Difficulty in keeping the same TE in charge of a group due to transfers.

(c) Finding funds. The additional work involved in the project was too much of a strain on the purse of the TE and the TT. There was no possibility of getting assistance from the Ministry or other source as the project was in its infancy.

(d) Burden of additional work on the TT e.g. summoning of meetings, meeting various government officers, visits to the villages, all this being extra work for the TT.

(e) Transport problem. Since two of the villages were situated in places without public transport, travelling to and fro became a problem.

(f) Due to shortage of water the programme in one village had to be curtailed during one session.

(g) Difficulty in eliciting full cooperation due the dominance of vested interests (Rotawewa)

(h) The unhealthy relationship of a head of a school with villagers in one place made the villagers mistrust the mission of the experimentors at the beginingt(Illukwewa/Rotawewa)

(i) Since this was the first time a programme of this nature was started in Sri Lanka, the problem of getting other departments to move in matters at a quicker pace and with a missionary zeal.

(j) Loss of confidence on the part of the villager in government and voluntary personnel because a large number had visited some of these villages earlier and had not lived up to the promises they had made.

(k) Difficulty in getting mass-media to give publicity to this programme.

7.30 (1) Organisation

(a) An exhibition of the resources of the village was held in the school premises. The exhibits included medicinal herbs, lime stone, bamboo material, fruits and articles turned out of local waste material and timber and arborics. This was organised by the villagers with the guidance of the TT. There were charts and diagrams which highlighted the present problems and future possibilities. The exhibition was attended by the Government Agent i.e. the administrative head of the district, the Chief Education Officer and other heads of departments and also the Political Head of the District.

(b) Friendly and cordial relations with the villagers led to a healthy understanding and trust with each other.

(c) Joining the villagers in their social life during their stay.

(d) Regular meetings were held between the villagers and the TT. Village representatives also participated in meetings which were held at the TC where representatives of other departments were also present.

(ii) Methods Adopted

The basis of selection of the villages was discussed with the Chief Education Officer of the District. With progress the innovation was brought to the notice of the Secretary, Ministry of Education and the Director, Teacher Education Branch of the Ministry of Education, TT, under the guidance of a TE, contacted other government offices to obtain their cooperation and help. All coordinating activities were done by the TC. A TT was appointed as a Chief Coordinating Officer. He on his own also held meetings at village level with the cooperation of the coordinating officer of each village. Drawing up of estimates and other matters came mainly under their purview.

(iii) Assistance received

(a) Funds and material came mainly from the Political Authority (extra administrative authority headed by a politician). Getting up of a water scheme supplying of bee boxes are two examples where money and material help was given from the District Development Council.

(b) Books, stationary, clothing from other schools.

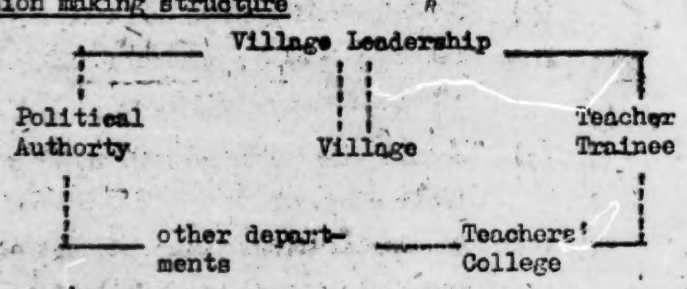
(c) Transport (sometimes) and water from the Irrigation Department.

(d) Equipment from the Ministry of Planning and Implementation.

7.40 Direction

(i) Decisions were taken after discussion with the staff, TC, village representatives, head master of the village school, government officials, Principal TC and TT.

(ii) Decision making structure



(iii) Self Directing Measures.

(a) A few young people were trained for leadership. These young men had to go to various departments for their requirements and problems and had to meet the correct officials. This took away the traditional fear out of them and gave them self confidence. This change was very markedly seen, towards the latter stages in quite a number of them. They were also involved in organising all activities at village level and also represented the respective villages at general meetings held at the TC.

(b) The ability of the TT to conduct discussions with the villagers, with officials of other departments, organise meetings at TC, drawing up of plans for development, innovating new teaching techniques, understanding children in the context of their background.

(c) The villagers were taught the art of bee keeping.

(d) Making the villagers to realise the potential resources they posses, was an important achievement in this programme.

(iv) Proposed Improvements

(a) Making Community Education a permenant course in the Teacher Training Curriculum. If each of the 28 TC in Sri Lanka attempt to develop a minimum of five villages, under this method, during a two year period, about 300 villages could benefit in some kind of socio-economic development. Furthermore the teachers who will be leaving at the end of the two year course to take up position in different parts of Sri Lanka, could try out a hand in Community Development, in the manner they were trained.

(b) TC to adopt villages by residing permanently on a roster basis. Close attention and supervision is possible under such a scheme.

(c) Preparing courses of studies to mee the special needs of the children in remote villages.

(d) Community Development as a part of the school curriculum. This kind of approach will enable the school to be the pivet in community development with the guidance of the teacher. Schools begin the breeding ground of future citizens will enable to shed petty rivalries and unite in constructive work towards nation building.

7.50 Control on the basis of Communication and Feedback

(i) Leaders of the village trained by the TC and the Head Master of the school are in touch with the TC.

(ii) Feedback mechanisms adopted.

(a) The Head Master makes observation on the progress and reports to the TC.

(b) The Rural Development Society in the village also makes observations and reports to the TC.

(iii) Appointed leaders for each village and the coordinating officer for all village are in contact with the village leadership.

(iv) Principal, TC and the TE also makes occassional visits and maintain a continous improvement.

(v) The Teacher Education Branch of the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, also visits for supervision and advice.

7.60 Evaluation

(i) Response from the villagers.

The response was very promising and encouraging. They had cooperated well with the TT and TE. The enthusiasm shown in participating and attending the meetings at the TC is further supportive of this fact. Parents and office bearers of the village organisations continue to have correspondence with the TC.

(ii) Response from the school.

The Principals and the Staff of the school involved in this work had very encouraging words about the programme. The Principal of the TC requests for a confidential report from the Principals of these schools at the end of every session and all reports had commended the work. Some wanted this work to be continued for a longer period of time.

(iii) Measures taken to find out effect and influence of the innovation in the field of education.

(a) A number of similar programmes but different in approach started in other TC in Sri Lanka as a result of the publicity given to this programme. Classes for dropouts, pre-school work, opening of the resources of the TC to the village community are some such examples.

(b) In these schools there was an increase in the number of children attending school, after the commencement of the project. Even children who had left school years ago came back during this period.

(c) Interest and enthusiasm shown by parents regarding the exhibition in the school, the new teaching programmes conducted outside the school, general activities in the school, more numbers attending Parent Teacher Association Meetings.

(d) The heads of the adjoining schools requesting to send TT for similar programmes to their schools as well.

(iv) Extent to which the innovation can be continued for a longer period.

Since it is not a part of the main course in the TC it cannot be extended for more than two weeks a term. However if sufficient funds are available an arrangement could be made to extend it further. Financial commitment is also an important factor.

(V) Follow up Activities

(a) Follow up of bee keeping boxes already distributed.

(b) Follow up of weaving machines already distributed.

(c) Follow up of work of the TT who followed this innovation programme. Of the 18 TT who participated in this, a satisfactory number has written to the Principal TC about the work they hope to commence. Lack of publicity, recognition from higher officers including the Principal and funds are some of the obstacles they seem to face.

8.00 Collaboration with other Departments and Ministries

The Ministries of Planning was of utmost importance and this Ministry readily granted some of the material and equipment we needed. Health, Irrigation, and Transport were some of the Departments that kindly obliged us in our work. The Village Councils and the District Development Council also assisted in this new venture. This work was also an eye opener for a large number of government officers in the District. However the actual work was time consuming and painstaking and required a great deal of patience, mainly due to the novelty of this project in Sri Lanka.

9.00 Present Development

9.10 Community Education has been introduced as a part of the Teacher Training Curriculum in Sri Lanka with effect from this year. The time allotted for this is 20 hours of work for the whole of the year.

9.20 Two Seminars on Community Education have been conducted to train TE for the above purpose.

9.30 A paper on this Project has been presented at APEID Conference on Innovations in Education held in Colombo in November 1976.

9.40 The Ministry of Education has also decided to conduct a two months special course for Principals of schools on Community Education. This course will also be conducted at the Hingurakgoda TC. The syllabus for this course was also drawn up by the Principal and the TE of the above TC After training these Principals are to be in charge of Community Education Centres organised on an electroal basis.

9.50 The same TC has planned to commence a project which is further development on the one already completed. Here the TT and the TE will reside in a village permanently, until a project is completed, on a roster basis and devote more time and energy on this. The lack of funds has delayed the commencement of the programme.

V/-